State of Iowa
Justice Information Systems Integration
Summary

Justice agencies throughout the nation increasingly recognize the importance of integrating their information systems in order to share critical data, documents, images and key transactions. In recognition of this need to share information, state and local jurisdictions, including the State of Iowa, are actively developing and implementing plans for comprehensive integrated justice information systems. Integrated systems improve the quality of information and thereby: improves public safety, eliminates data entry errors and redundant data entry, provides complete, current and timely data, improves the ability to evaluate policy decisions and changes, maximizes available resources, improves data retrieval response time, provides for better, more informed decision making, and improves the operational effectiveness of existing systems.

It is well known that each justice agency makes decisions regarding persons or cases that should be shared with other persons or agencies. Unfortunately, most systems have been developed in isolation of one another or on incompatible technologies. This results in independent systems that may share common data concepts but cannot communicate with each other. The goal of integration is to design a system or "variety of functions" to enable the efficient, accurate and timely sharing of information within and between justice agencies.

The challenge of criminal justice integration is widely known to those in the field, and to many, if not all policymakers. Communication among law enforcement, the judicial branch, and corrections at the local, state, and federal levels remains a major challenge in maximizing the equity, efficiency, and effectiveness of the national justice system. The Executive and Judicial branches play a lead role in bringing justice information users within their states together to achieve the benefits of information integration through the use of information technology (IT).

The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) has been promoting information integration, working closely with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and other federal and state officials to find ways that its programs can be more catalytic in creating effective cooperation between levels of government and across agency boundaries. Through a series of activities with various state and local government associations, OJP has laid the groundwork for integration and cooperation at the technical level, and recent developments in technology are reenergizing efforts at the local, state, and federal levels.

This is an opportune time for political and policy leadership and cross-agency collaboration to make integration become a reality.

In 1998, the National Governors Association (NGA) Chairman, Governor Tom Carper, appointed an eight-member Information Technology Task Force to examine ways in which states can more effectively use IT to meet citizen needs and improve state government operations. Criminal justice integration is a prime example of using IT to solve problems and improve service to citizens. A survey of the Governors of all 50 states was conducted in the spring of 1999 to determine Governors top priorities for IT applications, and nearly every responding governor listed criminal justice integration as a major near-term priority.

Through a cooperative agreement with the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the National Governors' Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices, Iowa is launching an initiative to integrate criminal justice information technology systems.

The goals of this initiative are to:

- Bring together the Governor and his designees, the Iowa Supreme Court and their staff, and policymakers from federal, state, and local governments and criminal justice agencies together to develop statewide plans to implement information technology solutions that integrate law enforcement, corrections, and criminal justice systems.

- Build on previous work supported by OJP including the National Criminal Justice Association state governance survey, the technical strategies developed by the National Association of State Information Resource Executives, the information exchange analysis being conducted by SEARCH, the Strategic Planning Model developed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), and other ongoing activities to develop leadership capacity at the state level for information technology integration.

- Provide a forum for public policymakers to discuss criminal justice integration in a less technical, more policy-oriented environment.

- Identify barriers and use team consulting among the participating entities to develop strategies and actions plans for eliminating the barriers.

- Provide expert and peer technical assistance opportunities to state agencies in the development and implementation of criminal justice integration strategies.

- Disseminate the results of state team activities to all states and the broader integrated criminal justice information systems community.

- Develop a governance and planning model for statewide criminal justice implementation and integration.

- Provide feedback to the Office of Justice Programs and Bureau of Justice Assistance in their supporting efforts to integrate state, federal and local information systems.

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